

Stress

- Many students, whatever their backgrounds, will be happy, optimistic and excited
- Some ELL students, however, may be exposed to higher levels of stress than most native-speaker students
- This stress may affect their emotional state, their attendance, and/or their work
- Their stress is not your responsibility; however, it will affect their ability to learn, and so understanding it will help you to help them

What are some of the potential sources of stress that particularly affect ELL students?

Thought Exercise

If you have recently come to Canada, and specifically Mississauga, take a look back at your experience in coming here. How did the change affect you as a person and as a student?

If you have been in Canada, and specifically Mississauga, for a while, try putting yourself in the shoes of someone who has just arrived from a very different context (Nigeria? Ukraine? Lebanon? Beijing? La Tuque, Quebec?) to attend U. of T. What are some factors about the Anglophone Canadian university experience that might make her stressed? How might these stresses affect how she interacts with you?

Writing Ramifications

There are some typical problems in ELL writing that you will see. These include issues with:

- proper use of articles
- punctuation (the comma!)
- hedging and strength of claim
- lack of familiarity with citation expectations
- preposition use (on their own and as elements of verbs)
- placement of modifiers
- pronoun ambiguity
- proper tense use
- sentence variety
- sentence length
- use of transitions between sentences
- use of topic sentences and other signposts to guide the reader

How do you feel about these aspects of writing? Which ones are most important? Which are less important? Are you comfortable with critiquing/explaining the important ones?

Thought Experiment

Imagine a student wants to meet with you to discuss his writing. He submits this paragraph (dealing with causes of youth crime) to talk about:

“The reasons for problem. First, teenage crime rate was increasing very fast. Besides, the age of criminals are going to down. Therefore, this is a serious problem. The society structure is toward the money principal; and moreover, everyone thinks that money is the most important thing. But it is clear that it is about the source of crime.” (Adapted from Eli Hinkel, *Teaching Academic ESL Writing*, Erlbaum, 2004, p. 202.)

1. What issues do you notice in this paragraph? How would you describe them?
2. What issues would you choose to talk about at the meeting?

8 Teaching Suggestions

1. Using exemplars—it will be very helpful for all students, and especially ELL students, if you can give them authentic examples of the sorts of writing that they will have to produce.
2. Show the techniques that enable us to quickly grasp what is being said—understanding the importance of key phrases, skimming articles, the importance of abstracts/intros/conclusions, using topic sentences for overviews, finding thesis statements, etc.
3. **Do not assume that students understand their assignment instructions**, especially the verbs. Ensure that these are reviewed—ideally in a way that encourages students to express their understanding of the assignment in their own words.
4. Emphasize context and genre in reading and writing, to aid in comprehension and their own writing. What are the essential or typical characteristics of the genres in which they have to read or write? For example, what tense(s) do they use and what do those tenses signify? What are typical structures in these genres?
5. Emphasize the importance of planning ahead, and reinforce that emphasis through write-to-learn assignments, group work, etc. This is important for everyone, but especially so for those—such as many ELL students—who need extra time to complete their work, and hence need good time management skills.
6. Be aware that not everyone listening to you will be entirely comfortable in English. Watch out for such things as use of slang, speaking quickly, expecting answers quickly, slurring words together.
7. Watch out that students don't get left out. If they choose to sit out and not participate, that is their right, but make sure you've done as much as you can to make the environment a welcoming one.
8. Enforcing a pause (for thought, or for jotting down ideas) after questions lets everyone have a chance to think out their answer.

Additional Resources

1. You—you are a resource and students will be happy to draw on you to the degree that you make yourself available. So you need to know your limits and where you stand re: equity/equality—do as much as you can but don't burn yourself out or exploit yourself!
2. The RGASC—especially Dr. Laura Taylor and myself, both of whom are specifically trained in helping ELL students
3. The Purdue Owl (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>)
4. writing.utoronto.ca
5. <https://www.utscc.utoronto.ca/twc/online-resources>
6. Google and Google Scholar for checking usage
7. The University of Melbourne has a great pdf on using tenses in scientific writing that can be helpful for other sorts of writing:
http://services.unimelb.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/471294/Using_tenses_in_scientific_writing_Update_051112.pdf